Nº III

THE THEATRICAL

CENSOR.

BY A CITIZEN.

Mentior ac si quid, merdis caput inquiner albis
Corvorum . . . . . Hor. Sat. viii, Lib. 1.

. . . . . Truth, tho' sometimes clad
In painful lustre, yet is always welcome;
Dear as the light that shews the lurking rock:
'Tis the fair star that, ne'er into the main
Descending, leads us safe through stormy life.
Thomson.

Wednesday Evening, Dec. 11.

SHERIDAN'S "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

Sir Peter Teazle, Warren;—*Sir Oliver Surface*, Cross;—*Joseph Surface*, Wood;—*Charles Surface*, Jefferson;—*Rowley*, Taylor;—*Lady Teazle*, Mrs. Wignell.

THIS Comedy was brought out at Drury Lane, in May, 1778, and its representation has seldom failed to attract a genteel, if not a numerous audience. Garrick spoke of it in the highest terms of panegyric, and predicted its success. There perhaps was never a more perfect composition exhibited on the stage. In it there is not a feature void of expression. Its combination is happy; its language polished; its denouement well contrived. In a moral point of view it is not unexceptionable; but so much has already been said on the subject, that we shall decline censuring it here.

Mr. Warren's *Sir Peter Teazle* was a chaste performance. His attitude when the screen falls, and discovers his wife, was admirably descriptive of the temporary stupefaction which such an event must naturally produce. The *eclaircissement* with Lady Teazle was well managed. We see no reason, however, that Sir Peter, although a choleric man, should have a face like the well-known Red-Lion of Brentford. Mr. W. had used the *rouge* a little too freely.

Mr. Wood's *Joseph* was far above mediocrity, although not so perfect as we expected, from our opinion that Mr. W's talents are better adapted to such characters than to more playful ones, where greater exertion is necessary.

We were pleased with Mr. Jefferson in *Jerry Diddler;* we admired him in *Timothy Quaint*; we might have liked him in *Careless;* but his *Charles Surface* was the worst performance, without any exception, that we have witnessed on these boards. Mr. Jefferson has undoubtedly misconceived the character of *Charles* altogether, and makes him another *Diddler*. His exhibition a second time of this part,

and the death of a dear friend,
Would go near to make a man look sad.

Rowley, who should be represented as a good old steward, bending beneath the weight of years, was performed by *Mr. Taylor*, a young man, who seemed very unwilling to part with his *greenness*. This character, which is almost as interesting as any in the Comedy, was entirely lost by Mr. T's incapacity. His appearance and manner were like those of a London undertaker soliciting a job.

Of Mr. Cross we cannot yet speak fully. We have not been able to discover his *forte*. He may be an useful man to the managers; but he will always insult a discerning audience in the part of *Sir Oliver Surface*.

We now come to the most agreeable part of our duty: a just eulogium on fine taste and elegant acquirements. When we first knew Mrs. Wignell she was Miss Brunton, of Covent

Garden Theatre; the delight of youth, and the admiration of age. We see her altered, indeed, in person; but not a spark of her attraction as an actress seems extinct. *Lady Teazle* may not fear the efforts of *Backbite*, nor the insinuations of *Sneerwell*.

DIMOND'S "HUNTER OF THE ALPS."

Felix, Wood;—*Rosalvi*, M'Kenzie;—*Jeronymo*, Jefferson;—*Juan*, Woodham;—*Helena di Rosalvi*, Mrs. Woodham;—*Genevieve*, Mrs. Seymour.

THE plot of this little piece is simple, and soon told. It opens with a chorus of vassals and dependants assembled in the great hall of a castle in Savoy, formerly belonging to a Noble, but lately purchased by *Felix*, returned from India with a large fortune. *Felix*, it seems, was a military adventurer, and had quitted his family at Turin, when very young. On his arrival, after an absence of twenty years, he found his parents in the grave, and his only brother gone away, no one knew whither. *Felix*, having made every enquiry for him in vain, makes up his mind to divide his wealth with every child of necessity; and is welcomed to his newly-purchased estate by a chorus of rustics. *Genevieve* and *Claudine*, two maidens of the village, sing the following duet:

Thrice welcome, signor, to the bowers of Savoy,
In the prayers of its natives for ever live blest,
Each morn may the sun freshly wake you to joy,
And leave you unchanged when it rolls down the west!
Beloved and beloving, the light-footed hours
With step that is heard not, here laughingly pass,
Old time hides his scythe under fillets of flowers,
And scatters in air the dull sand from his glass!
High Alps gleam around us—a rampart of rocks,
On whose white dazzling summits the tempest oft roves,
Yet peacefully bleat in the valley our flocks,
And the murmur of ring-doves is heard in our groves

Then welcome, signor, to the bowers of Savoy,
In the prayers of its natives for ever live blest,
Each morn may the sun freshly wake you to joy,
And leave you unchanged when it rolls down the west!

Felix being one day on a hunting-party accidentally loses his attendants, and is attacked by a man who is driven to the rash act by the extreme distress of a wife and children, starving in his cottage. This man proves to be *Rosalvi*, the brother of *Felix*, who had been forced from Turin by the cruelty of his creditors, and had taken refuge, with his family, among the Alps, where he embraced the employment of hunting, for support. The *denouement* is of course happy.

Mr. Woodham was prevented by indisposition, we understand, from introducing several songs, which he intended to sing. *Helena di Rosalvi*, the fond mother, leaning in anguish over her starving children, was affectingly depicted by Mrs. Woodham, whose *forte* does not appear to be in the light walks of fashionable Comedy, but in the more simple display of natural feeling. Mr. M'Kenzie was more at home in *Rosalvi* than in most of the other parts he attempts; but we can listen to no actor with pleasure who pronounces viciously. The Scottish accent, we conceive, may be overcome by strict attention. Mr. M'Kenzie is pains-taking and industrious; and appears to deserve encouragement.

Friday Evening, Dec. 13.

HOLCROFT'S "ROAD TO RUIN."

Dornton, Warren;—*Harry Dornton*, Wood;—*Sulky*, Francis;—*Silky*, Blisset;—*Goldfinch*, Harwood (his first appearance these six years);—*Widow Warren*, Mrs. Morris (first time);—*Sophia*, Mrs. Wood.

THE *Road to Ruin* has always been relished by bucks and bloods, and boarding-school misses. It is an apology for profligacy, extravagance, and girlish propensities. *Harry Dornton*, the hero of the piece, is guilty of all the vices of a modern

man of fashion; and because he is at length discovered to have some qualities proceeding from what is termed goodness of heart, and exhibits signs of a natural affection for an indulgent parent, when by dissipation he has brought him to the brink of ruin, is, forsooth, held up to our children as a model of virtue. *Miss Sophia* is a pettish gadding maiden of eighteen, "sighing like furnace" for this nonpareil *Dornton*; and her *virtues* are finally rewarded by having the rake bestowed on her in marriage, &c. &c. *O tempora! O mores!* If the spirit of Shakespear should ever deign to hover over our theatres, and observe his productions neglected for these fustian efforts of the New School, how indignant must it turn from the scene!

Mr. Blisset in *Silky* was excellent. *Sulky* also appeared to advantage.

Mrs. Morris *has* rendered the stage much service; and there was a time when "persuasion hung upon her lips." She is one among the few who thought intellectual improvement necessary to her profession, and took great pains to that effect. In private she still exhibits proofs of a cultivated understanding; but, as an actress, in parts that require vivacity and exertion, she should certainly never appear. It is our wish to spare the feelings of this lady; and we trust that she will adopt a line more suited to her ability. In the *Widow Warren* she was very defective.

> Ye bene so wilde, it semith as ye rave.
> It sate *ye* wele better, aie in a cave
> To bide, and rede on holy saintis lives:
> Let *maidens gon to dance and young wives.*

Mrs. Wood's *Sophia* was well supported: yet there are some asperities in her voice which often grate upon the ear, but which, with care, might soon be rubbed off. Her laugh is particularly unpleasant. It is not the expression which

> Plays round the heart, and brightens up our sorrow,
> Like gleams of sunshine in a low'ring sky.

COLMAN'S "WAYS AND MEANS;" OR, A "TRIP TO DOVER."

Sir David Dunder, Harwood;—*Random*, Wood;—*Scruple*, Rutherford;—*Tiptoe*, Blisset;—*Paul Peery*, Bray;—*Lady Dunder*, Mrs. Francis;—*Harriot*, Mrs. Jefferson;—*Kitty*, Mrs. Wood.

THIS *petite* comedy continues to be a favorite, although certainly not the best of Colman's production. When it was first published, some very severe attacks appeared against it in the newspapers, which provoked the dramatist to a petulant and illiberal reply. He complained of its having been

> Winnow'd with so rough a wind,
> That even its Corn has seem'd as light as Chaff,
> And good from bad found no partition.

"Laugh and whim," he observes, "were his objects;"—and therein he has in great measure succeeded.

To judge of "Ways and Means" by the stricter rules of criticism, little indeed can be said in its praise. *Peery* is a second *Boniface;* and the rest of the *Dramatis Personæ*, with the exception of *Sir David Dunder*, have been long known and hacknied on the stage. Nor do we perceive in him much originality, when he is plucked of his favorite expression, "Be quiet; I know it;" which forms a great part of the *wit* of the piece. The plot is bad; the incidents improbable. Mr. Colman seems to have imitated some of the absurd Italian operas, which are intended merely as vehicles for music, and where the performers frequently sing and grope about for half an hour within arm's length of each other, to make the audience believe (to whom they are visible enough) that they are in the dark. The gallery-scene, in the third act, is a striking instance of this ridiculous *stravaganza*.

The character of *Sir David Dunder* seemed better adapted to Mr. Harwood's talents than that of *Goldfinch*. The latter is sure to suffer in the hands of a man of taste; as there is no model for it in all Nature's works, even where she is most

fanciful—on the course of Newmarket or in the hundreds of Drury.

Blisset might be more happy in his drunken scene, were he to study the graces. Strange as it may appear, there is a grace to be observed even in drunkenness. Garrick being asked by a French actor, how he liked his performance in a certain play, replied, "You did the part of the drunk-"kard with much judgment, and, what is extremely difficult "in such characters, with much grace. But permit me to "make one observation:—your left foot was perfectly *sober* "all the time." So admirable was the conception of this inimitable actor, that at a single glance he would discover the most trifling defect; and what he has applied to the left foot of the Frenchman, we may apply to the legs, arms, and even heads of many of our performers. When we see a lover heaving his chest, distorting his countenance, and "sawing the air" with his hands, it is frequently found that the other parts of his body are in profound apathy. Physical inebriety affects the whole nervous system, from the head to the foot; and the moral inebriety of the affections, in our opinion, must act in the same manner and degree. Action, as we have before observed, is the true language of nature; and we scarcely ever find a performer who pays a proper attention to it. Provided he remember his *cue*, and stand not in need of the prompter's aid, he conceives he has done his duty to the manager and the public, without considering that action will say much more than words, and that the time he passes at billiards or other amusements should be devoted to the study of the effects of passions on the human frame.

Macrobius relates a circumstance which may, in some measure, elucidate our remarks.—Hylas, a pupil of Pylades, who had made so great a progress in his profession as nearly to excel his master, was one day playing a part, the last words of which were; "Agamemnon the Great." Hylas, to convey the idea of *greatness*, stretched out his body, as he would have done in describing a tall person. Pylades, who had

placed himself amongst the audience, could not contain himself, and exclaimed, " Thou art representing him *tall*, and not *great*. The people, forcibly struck by this critique, desired Pylades to mount the stage, and play the part himself. He obeyed; and, coming to the speech in question, he represented Agamemnon *pensive;* for, in his idea, nothing could better express the situation of so great a king, and so celebrated, a general than *thinking* for all those whose welfare depended on his conduct.*

* Saturnal. lib. ii, c. 7. Nec Pylades histrio nobis omittendus est, qui clarus in opere suo fuit temporibus Augusti et Hylam discipulum usque ad æqualitatis contentionem eruditione provexit. Populus deindè inter utriusque suffragia divisus est. Et cum canticum quoddam saltaret Hylas, cujus clausula erat, Τὸν μέγαν Ἀγαμέμνονα, sublimem ingentemque Hylas velut metiebatur. Non tulit Pylades, et exclamavit e caveâ, Σὺ μακρὸν, ὦ μέγαν ποιεῖς. Tunc populus eum coëgit, idem saltare canticum. Cumque ad locum venisset, quem reprehenderat, expressit cogitantem, nihil magis ratus magno duci convenire, quam pro omnibus cogitare.

MISTER SENSUR,

I WAS won of the ladies hup in the hupper boxes wen the gentlemen kquarrilld abowt the musik, and I think itt a grate shame that thay shoud be hallowd to make such a noize, and friten us hout of our witts. It is verry ard that wen peple goes to see the play, thay shoud be anoied by a parsel of hignorant yong men who has no taste for polyte amuzements. I hope this letter will appeer in your next Number, and you l oblidge

Yours to command

DOLLY DABBLE.

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